

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **City of Phoenix, Bahrain Sign Agreement to Boost Bilateral Ties** **Mayor Phil Gordon signs MoU with Kingdom's Economic** **Development Board**

**PHOENIX, AZ – February 14, 2011** –Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon signed an agreement today with the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB) that will facilitate strong commercial and economic ties between Phoenix and the Gulf nation.

A delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain – increasingly recognized as a gateway to the trillion dollar Gulf market – joined Mayor Gordon today to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The deal aims to maximize opportunities presented by the Bahrain-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and create opportunities for cooperation in key sectors, including healthcare, education, energy, life sciences, financial services and industrial services.

The agreement stipulates that both parties will participate in activities that stimulate bilateral trade and business development, including conferences, symposiums and workshops, all designed to encourage strong business ties.

Mayor Gordon, who has made international economic development a focus during his final year as Mayor said, "This is a tremendous opportunity. During a down economy, such as the one we currently face, it is both a good diplomatic and economic decision to sign this MoU. I look forward to the good that will come of this for both our great city, and the Kingdom of Bahrain."

Speaking at the signing of the MoU, Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al-Khalifa, Chief Executive of the EDB, said: "We, in Bahrain, are very pleased to have entered into this strategic agreement with Mayor Gordon and the City of Phoenix. This MoU represents an opportunity to build on our longstanding and close diplomatic relationship with the US and our strong economic and trade connections – including the success of our Free Trade Agreement. We strongly believe there are joint economic interests between Bahrain and the Phoenix business community, and look forward to developing stronger ties."

The Bahrain-US FTA – the first between the US and any Gulf nation – has greatly enhanced opportunities for US businesses in a region anticipating enviable levels of economic growth. Signed in 2004 and coming into force in 2006, it has been the cornerstone of growing bilateral trade which in 2008 exceeded US \$1.4 billion, an increase of 25 percent in just three years.

Leading US companies such as Kraft, Ernst & Young and Microsoft are already in Bahrain. The World Bank has recognized Bahrain's stable business environment, rating the country 28th best in the world in its "Doing Business 2011" report. Bahrain is also among the world's top 10 most economically free nations according to the annual Index

of Economic Freedom, published by The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal. The Kingdom is 10th of 183 economies worldwide, up three places from last year to one behind the United States in the influential rankings. Bahrain remains the most free of 17 nations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the only in MENA to have featured in the world's top 20 since the launch of the Index in 1995.

Shaikh Mohammed and the Bahrain delegation – which includes senior dignitaries – are in Phoenix for several days visiting the local business community, from small businesses to business leaders. They will also be visiting Minneapolis and New York City during their visit to the US, where they will meet business leaders to discuss opportunities for partnerships and bilateral investment.

Mayor Gordon and Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al-Khalifa will be available today and tomorrow for interviews with members of the media.